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SINGING MICE

IN November, 1916, Mr. B. S. York, of Ann Arbor, brought to me a "singing" house mouse that had been captured in his home. This mouse had been heard by members of his family for several weeks, especially late at night and early in the morning. Arrangements were made to carry on breeding experiments with it but it lived only two weeks.

Singing mice have been recorded in a number of publications dating back many years. In 1912 Coburn¹ reported some work he had done with a female singer captured in December, 1911. This individual when mated with an ordinary mouse gave birth to five litters (thirty-three young). None of these were singers and no singers appeared in either the second or third generations. Two other singing mice were described by Coburn in 1913.² One was caught in the home of an Italian family in November, 1912, and the other was taken by a farmer in Michigan in March, 1913. Both of these were females.

The Ann Arbor specimen that was brought to me also proved on dissection to be a female. Her song was similar to that reported by Coburn as follows:

The sound is best described as a rapid whole-toned trill involving the tones *c* and *d*. . . . The quality of the tone resembled somewhat that of a fife or flute, but each tone ended with a slight throaty click.

In every case the song could be heard at least 15 or 20 feet away.

Many causes have been proposed for the presence of this ability to sing such as pregnancy, a diseased condition of the lungs or vocal cords, a parasitized liver, etc. There were no embryos or young in the Ann Arbor specimen and Dr. George R. LaRue was unable to find any parasites that could have induced the singing.

It has been suggested that since all of the singers captured thus far have been females, this characteristic may be sex-linked and due to some structural modification of the vocal apparatus.

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¹ Coburn, C. A., *Journ. Animal Behavior*, Vol. 2, 1912, pp. 364-366.

² Coburn C. A., *Journ. Animal Behavior*, Vol. 3, 1913, p. 388.